

# Establishing Supportive Relationships Between Teachers, Staff, and Students

Clay Roberts, M.S., Senior Trainer, Vision Training Associates  
David Osher, Ph.D., Principal Investigator, SSSTA



Safe and Supportive Schools  
Engagement | Safety | Environment

# The Safe and Supportive Schools Technical Assistance Center



- Funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools.
- Provides training and support to states, including 11 Safe and Supportive Schools grantees and other state administrators; administrators of districts and schools; teachers; support staff at schools; communities and families; and students.
- Goal is to improve school's conditions for learning through measurement and program implementation, so that all students have the opportunity to realize academic success in safe and supportive environments.

\*The content of this presentation was prepared under a contract from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools to the American Institutes for Research (AIR). This presentation does not necessarily represent the policy or views of the U.S. Department of Education, nor do they imply endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education.



### **Which of the following best describes the primary reason you chose to participate in today's session?**

- You are gathering practical information and strategies you'll be teaching to, or sharing with, colleagues or subordinates.
- You are interested in gaining new skills and strategies for your own professional use.
- Both of the above.

# School Experiences Which Contribute to a Healthy School Climate and Academic Achievement



Protection

- Connection
- Safety
- Positive Relationships With Adults And Peers
- Caring Interactions
- Academic Challenges
- Academic Support
- Academic Engagement
- Positive Role Modeling
- Social Emotional Learning
- Positive Behavioral Supports
- Access to Needed Services And Supports





**1** Review the research on relationship building in schools

**2** Provide a model for deepening relationships

**3** Provide ten promising strategies from the field for building supportive relationships with students



## Individual Strategies

- 1 Encourage staff to express care
- 2 Equip staff to provide effective feedback
- 3 Encourage staff to develop relationship plans



## Organizational Strategies

- 4 Engage students in staffing and other classroom and school decisions
- 5 Adapt scheduling and structure to facilitate relationships
- 6 Establish staff norms
- 7 Launch a social marketing campaign
- 8 Use staff meetings to shift the culture and expectations
- 9 Recognize staff for emphasizing quality relationships
- 10 Develop staff-student mentoring models

# Research on Establishing Relationships in Schools



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# Why Are Relationships Important?



## They increase academic achievement.

- Students who feel connected to school are
  - ✓ More likely to attend school
  - ✓ More likely to stay in school longer
  - ✓ More likely to have higher grades and test scores
- Students with feelings of closeness with their teacher have been shown to
  - ✓ Work harder in school
  - ✓ Spend more time on homework
  - ✓ Receive better grades
  - ✓ Have more confidence in their academic abilities



# Why Are Relationships Important?



## They decrease high-risk behaviors.

- Students who feel connected to schools are
  - ✓ Less likely to smoke cigarettes
  - ✓ Less likely to drink alcohol
  - ✓ Less likely to have sexual intercourse
  - ✓ Less likely to have emotional problems
  - ✓ Less likely to experience suicidal thoughts or attempts



# Why Are Relationships Important?



## They make schools safer.

- Students who feel connected to schools are
  - ✓ Less likely to carry weapons
  - ✓ Less likely to become involved in violence
  - ✓ Less likely to be involved in dangerous activities



# Who Can Build Relationships?



- Certificated staff
- Classified staff
- Students
- Community and Families



# Model for Establishing Relationships in Schools





## Levels of relationships and influence:

- **Level 1 - Inviting a relationship**
  - ✓ Basic positive social interaction
- **Level 2 – Nurturing the relationship and building trust**
  - ✓ Taking a personal interest in the student
  - ✓ Demonstrating respect and empathy
  - ✓ Understanding needs
  - ✓ Treating students fairly
  - ✓ Identifying and encouraging gifts and talents
- **Level 3 – Leveraging the relationship**
  - ✓ Challenging them
  - ✓ Mentoring them
  - ✓ Maintaining contact



# Establishing Individual Relationships in Schools



# Some things to Consider



- Your attitude and beliefs
- Cultural competence and responsiveness
- Students needs and experiences
- The specific situation



# Strategy # 1



## Encourage staff to express care.

- Nonverbal messages
  - ✓ a smile, a nod, a thumbs up, a high five, a pat on the back
- Affirming people
  - ✓ verbally and in writing
- Giving your time
- Going beyond peoples' expectations
  - ✓ a gift, a card, attending their game or performance, helping them with a problem
- Telling people that you care
  - ✓ about them as a person and about their academic success
- Using humor and “playing together”





## Equip staff to provide effective feedback.

- Pay attention (don't ignore)
- Be kind (no putdowns)
- Focus on Positives (three positives for every correction)
- Redirect inappropriate behavior



# Redirecting Inappropriate Behavior



- Be calm.
- Take them aside.
- Express your feelings and identify the inappropriate behavior.
  - ✓ e.g., “I was surprised when you ...” “I was worried when you...”
- Indicate that the behavior is not like them.
  - ✓ e.g., “I often see you...” “I know you are capable of...”
- Ask what happened.
- Say that you understand but the behavior was inappropriate.
  - ✓ e.g., “I understand how that could make you mad, but what you did was...”
- Identify and model an appropriate alternative.
  - ✓ e.g., “Can you show me?” “would you like me to show you?”
- State the consequences. If this is a repeat behavior
- Thank them for listening.



# Strategy # 3



## Encourage staff to develop a relationship plan.

- Is there any damage I need to repair?
- Is there anything I need to stop doing?
- What am I going to start doing?
- What am I going to keep doing?



# Organizational Strategies for Establishing Relationships in Schools



# Strategy # 4



## Engage Students in staffing decisions.

- Engage students in staffing and other classroom and school decisions.
- Involve students in the hiring process.
- Use student input in staffing assignments.



Research

Model

Individual  
Strategies

Organizational  
Strategies





## Adapt scheduling to facilitate relationships.

- **Looping** - Schedule students so that they have some of the same teachers for multiple years, thus increasing the opportunity to develop supportive relationships.
- **Academies, Houses, or Magnets** – Create smaller learning communities within the school that allow students and staff to spend additional time together around common interests and themes.
- **Advisories** – Structure time within the school day or week where students spend time with a staff advisor.
- **Transition Support** – Provide both staff and student orientation and support for incoming classes and new students.



# Strategy # 6



## Establish staff norms.

- Identify staff norms that contribute to a positive school climate and reinforce, reward, and hold each other accountable for those behaviors e.g.:
  - ✓ high expectations for all students
  - ✓ positive approaches to discipline
  - ✓ no display of anger or sarcasm
  - ✓ model pro social behavior
  - ✓ no bullying or harassment
- Agree on hallway behaviors that invite relationships e.g. smiling, making eye contact (as culturally appropriate), using students' names, being present before and after school and during passing times





## Launch a Social Marketing Campaign.

- Identify a brand for the campaign
- With the help of students and staff create different strategies for communicating that message.
- Make sure there are multiple messages throughout the year
- Strategies should be designed to reach both students and staff.



# Strategy # 8



## Use staff meetings to shift the culture and expectations.

- **Relationship Stories** - Begin each staff meeting with five minutes of relationship storytelling.
- **Model Supportive Relationships** – Both in staff meetings and in day-to-day interactions.
- **Turn-Around Kids** – Have staff nominate young people who have made a significant change for the better. Invite the student and their family to the staff meeting to be recognized.



# Strategy # 9



## Recognize staff for emphasizing quality relationships.

- **Relationship builder of the month** - Each month select a staff member who has done something out of the ordinary to make a connection with a student or family. Involve staff and students in the selection process.
- **School storybook** - Capture the best examples and stories of relationship building in a booklet. Share the booklet with staff and new hires to recognize and reinforce the relationship culture.



# Strategy # 10



## Develop Staff- Student Mentoring Models.

- **Staff to students** – Involve students in selecting of staff as mentors. Target students who are struggling academically or behaviorally.
- **Student to student** – Involve students in identifying a core group of trusted students and staff. Provide on-going training and support to improve relationships and climate at school.





- **Relationships matter** – not just teacher-student but the whole web of relationships in a school community.
- **Deepening positive relationships can be a powerful tool** – for learning, for reducing high-risk behavior, and for creating safer schools.
- **Quality relationships don't “just happen”** – they can be intentionally nurtured and cultivated through field tested strategies.
- **On-going measurement is important** – for improvement and to reinforce and sustain the effort.



- **Survey Management**

March 2, 2011 4:00 pm – 5:30 pm ET

March 3, 2011 11:00 pm – 12:30 pm ET

- **Bullying Prevention**

March 16, 2011 4:00 pm – 5:30 pm ET

March 17, 2011 11:00 am – 12:30 pm ET

- **Survey Development**

March 30, 2011 4:00 pm – 5:30 pm ET

March 31, 2011 11:00 pm – 12:30 pm ET



- **Addressing Risk Behavior through Positive Youth Development Strategies**

April 13, 2011                      4:00 pm – 5:30 pm ET

April 14, 2011                      11:00 – 12:30 pm ET

- **Survey Administration**

April 27, 2011                      4:00 pm – 5:30 pm ET

April 28, 2011                      11:00 am – 12:30 pm ET

- **School Based Climate Teams (Part 1)**

May 11, 2011                      4:00 pm – 5:30 pm ET

May 12, 2011                      11:00 – 12:30 pm ET

- **Analysis of Survey Data**

May 25, 2011                      4:00 pm – 5:30 pm ET

May 26, 2011                      11:00 – 12:30 pm ET



- For more information about the resources presented on this Webinar or if you would like additional resources, please email [sssta@air.org](mailto:sssta@air.org) or call 1-800-258-8413.

***Thank you for your time today. You will  
now be directed to a short evaluation of  
today's Webinar.***

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